

SCOTTISH HOME AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT

*Accommodation needs  
of the Scottish Record Office  
Registrar-General's Office  
and Lyon Office*

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REPORT OF A COMMITTEE  
APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR SCOTLAND

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*Secretary:*

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## *NOTE*

The estimated gross total expenditure of the Committee is £169 7s. 10d., of which £136 18s. 4d. represents the estimated cost of printing and publishing this report.

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TO THE RIGHT HON. MICHAEL NOBLE, M.P.,  
*Secretary of State for Scotland.*

SIR,

On the 1st November, 1961, your predecessor appointed us to form a Committee with the following terms of reference:

To enquire into the accommodation needs of the Scottish Record Office, the Office of the Registrar General and the Lyon Office;

To consider the extent to which these needs require the use of additional buildings in central Edinburgh having regard to

- (a) The requirements of those who have occasion to consult the records of those offices,
- (b) considerations of land use, and
- (c) considerations of capital and running costs and of staffing;

and to make recommendations.

We now have the honour to submit to you our report.

We have held fifteen meetings. At the beginning of our enquiry and in the course of it we addressed invitations to a number of individuals and bodies who appeared to us to have an interest in the matters covered by our terms of reference. Most of those who received this invitation responded by letting us have a statement of their views. In addition, evidence was received from persons who had read of our appointment in the press or heard of it otherwise. A list of these persons and organisations is given in Appendix A. We have had meetings with the Keeper of the Records, the Registrar General, the Lord Lyon King of Arms, the Lord President of the Court of Session and a number of others whose views we particularly wanted on different aspects of our enquiry. We are indeed grateful to all those who prepared memoranda and helped us in other ways.

We also commissioned an enquiry by the Organisation and Methods Division of the Treasury into the methods employed by the Record Office and Registrar General's Office for storing records and making them available to the public. This enquiry also covered the issue of what additional arrangements would be required, particularly in connection with the inspection of records, on the assumption that accommodation additional to the existing buildings would be required. The report of this enquiry was a valuable and informative document and we are indebted to those who compiled it. We are also grateful to those listed in Appendix B who were asked for and provided information on certain points which arose in our enquiry.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Problem Stated*

1. The accommodation required by the three Offices comprises record storage, office accommodation and accommodation for members of the public who wish to consult the records. In the following paragraphs we consider each Office separately, distinguishing the various types of accommodation required.

#### THE SCOTTISH RECORD OFFICE

2. This Office is the crux of the problem. In recent years its accommodation difficulties have been the subject of recommendations by the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries and by the Scottish Records Advisory Council. The accommodation at present in use consists of the whole of Old Register House\* (with the exception of a small part allocated to the Lyon Office), part of the accommodation in New Register House and some accommodation of a temporary character in office premises in the vicinity (Eagle Buildings) which are not designed for record storage purposes. If attention be confined for the moment to the storage aspect it can confidently be forecast that, on figures of present and immediately foreseeable intake and with continuance of the existing practice of storing and preserving that intake, the reserve still available for storage will be exhausted in a few years.

3. The Keeper, Sir James Fergusson, has made certain estimates based on the position in July, 1960. The free space then available amounted to 8,270 linear feet. We understand that this could be increased with more compact shelving by some 2,500 feet, but from this about 1,000 feet must be deducted to provide for records unshelved in July, 1960. He also estimated the average annual intake over the next 50 years at 1,500 linear feet. We examine this latter figure in detail at a later stage in our report (pars. 28-32). If it were regarded as applicable to the immediate future the remaining space would be exhausted soon after 1966, but this is unlikely. The figure of 1,500 linear feet per year over fifty years assumes an increase of 50 per cent. during that period on the average intake in recent years. Again, the figure of 1,500 linear feet depends upon an inflow in significant quantity of public department records which so far have made little appreciable demand on the storage facilities of the Office; but even without any such accession of departmental records, saturation point could be reached in some nine to ten years. Taking everything into account, especially the time required to make changes in record storage arrangements, we are in no doubt that decisions about the future needs of the Scottish Record Office are urgently required.

4. The accommodation for the public, including professional searchers, using the Office for research and other purposes does not present the same pressing problem, but it could with considerable advantage be improved. Rearrangement of the staff accommodation may be desirable, and it seems unlikely that this could be achieved without the allocation of some additional space for this purpose.

\* We use the term "Old Register House" to distinguish the 18th century General Register House from its 19th century neighbour, New Register House.

## THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

5. This Office is housed in the major part of New Register House, at present occupying 33 out of 50 rooms there. Extra staff accommodation is provided elsewhere at the time of each decennial census, but we have not thought it necessary to consider this temporary provision as part of the problem with which we are concerned. As regards storage of records the Registrar General's Office presents very much the same problems as face the Record Office, though not perhaps in so acute a form. On the Registrar General's estimates, a continuance of the present system of keeping the registers of births, deaths and marriages would exhaust the accommodation at present available to him by about 1975; and there is no accommodation for the records of the 1971 census. The facilities for use by the public are on the whole adequate and satisfactory. Although some additional office accommodation may later become necessary for statistical staff, we have not made any provision for this in our report, chiefly because the Teind Office, which is located in New Register House, will probably close within the next few years. Its records will have to be preserved, but wherever this is done some office accommodation seems likely to be released in this way.

## THE LYON OFFICE

6. The Lyon Office occupies three rooms and some corridor space on the first floor in Old Register House and three vaults for storage purposes, one in Old Register House and two in New Register House. Its accommodation seems far from appropriate to the dignity of the Court of the Lord Lyon King of Arms. In addition, it is quite inadequate for the storage of the existing and future records of the Office, for staff accommodation and for the convenience of the public having occasion to resort there.

## SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL ARGUMENTS

7. The Keeper of the Records, supported by the Scottish Records Advisory Council, has represented that New Register House should be transferred to the Scottish Record Office and that new accommodation should be found for both the Registrar General and the Lyon Office. He claims that the Scottish Record Office has a legal title to the occupation of New Register House, and that in any event it is essential to preserve the records together in one central site. He is opposed in principle to "outhousing", a term which we shall use to mean the transfer of parts of the records to a building elsewhere than in the centre of Edinburgh.

8. The Registrar General is opposed to the removal of his Office from New Register House. He points out that it is conveniently sited at a focal point in Edinburgh within easy reach of train and bus termini and is well suited to the purposes of his Office. This is important as it is visited by nearly 20,000 persons each year. He points out further that there are advantages in having the Registrar General's Office close to the Record Office (and the Department of the Registers of Scotland), as they can all use certain common services such as cleaning and watching.

9. The Lord Lyon regards it as essential for the economical transaction of the business of his Office and the convenience of the public that it should adjoin the Record Office and the Registrar General's Office. If it is necessary for him to move from his present rooms in Old Register House, he wishes to have his Office accommodated in New Register House.

10. It is clear from what we have already said that if New Register House is not transferred to the Scottish Record Office, that Office must either

- (a) reduce in some way the records it at present holds so as to create space in its present accommodation for incoming records;
- (b) enlarge the storage space available by additions or adaptations to Old Register House;
- (c) outhouse some of its records; or
- (d) obtain the use of an additional building in central Edinburgh.

In the next chapter we consider in detail to what extent the types of records held by the Record Office might be dealt with by methods (a) and (c) mentioned above if it were decided to leave the Registrar General in New Register House. We deal with method (b) in paragraph 58 and method (d) in paragraph 48.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Records held by the Scottish Record Office*

11. The records kept in the Record Office cover documents which are deposited or registered there under statute or statutory regulation, or are sent in by private individuals or other agencies for custody and preservation. The various categories of documents preserved in the Record Office are shown in Appendix C with details as to space occupied, estimated average annual intake and monthly usage.\* The table was supplied to us by the Keeper and the figures relate to July, 1960 except where otherwise stated.

12. *Items 1 and 2* include many of the documents of outstanding importance in Scottish history. No case arises at the present time for moving them from their present accommodation in Old Register House.

13. *Item 3.* These Court of Session records, as will be seen, form the second largest item in number and space occupied. They consist in the main of boxes or bundles of extracted and unextracted processes. Since 1959, when the Court of Session offices were removed from New Register House to Parliament Square, unextracted processes have no longer been transmitted from the Court to the Record Office, and the same course is now followed with extracted processes, beginning with those of 1961. The retained processes are stored in vacant premises in Parliament Square, and we are advised that, if all future processes continue to be so stored, there is accommodation there for them for about 60 years. This would mean a reduction in the storage needs of the Record Office over that period.

14. We note here that the Keeper of the Records does not regard this arrangement as satisfactory or in accordance with good record keeping practice. He is prepared to entertain the possibility that the Court should withhold processes for up to 20 years but no longer, and always subject to careful indexing and arrangement under suitable supervision. Even this would reduce his requirements by 130 linear feet per year for the next 20 years. Thereafter, in the Keeper's view, regular annual transmissions of processes more than 20 years old should be resumed.

15. Of the processes at present stored in Old Register House and Eagle Buildings

\* The monthly usage figures do not include casual enquiries by the public or staff use in cataloguing, indexing and answering postal enquiries.

(44,516 boxes or the equivalent in space occupied) only a very small proportion are consulted (see Appendix C). Those consulted are, with few exceptions, no more than twenty years old. It has been suggested to us that, in view of the very slight use made of any of these processes, their removal from Old Register House would cause very little inconvenience to anyone. Even if the removal were limited to processes more than twenty years old, the space which would thereby become available would be considerable. We consider the general question of outhousing in paragraphs 49-51.

16. A further step in line with suggestions which we have received is that along with, or independently of, their removal elsewhere, there could be a methodical examination and sifting of these boxes and bundles by a small specially appointed committee, on which the Keeper would be represented, with a view to the destruction of a great deal of material which examination showed could not be of interest or value to future generations. We refer to this later as the process of "weeding". We instance, as examples, processes in innumerable undefended divorce cases or actions of damages in "running down" cases; but we can make no reliable estimate of the result of this weeding process if it were to be undertaken. The Lord President of the Court of Session informed us that he himself contemplated taking some such steps with reference to processes retained in Parliament Square.

17. *Items 4, 5, 7 and 8* are now practically static in number. Their character also indicates that for research purposes they should remain in Old Register House.

18. *Item 6.* The majority of Sheriff Court records are not to be found in the Record Office. They remain in the various sheriffdoms to which they belong, under the care of the sheriffs of each sheriffdom. The Public Records (Scotland) Act, 1937, now regulates the matter. Subsections (1) and (3) of section 2 of that Act provide:

"(1) It shall be lawful for the Lord President of the Court of Session on the application of the Keeper and after consultation with the sheriff of any sheriffdom, to make an order directing that such of the sheriff court records of that sheriffdom as may be specified in the order shall be transmitted to the Keeper on or before a date specified therein not being earlier than three months from the date of the order:

Provided that no such order shall apply to any record which is of more recent date than twenty-five years before the date of the order, unless the Lord President is satisfied that adequate provision as regards care, indexing, and availability for consultation cannot otherwise be made.

(3) The sheriff of each sheriffdom shall be responsible for the proper care and preservation of the sheriff court records of that sheriffdom which have not been transmitted under subsection (1) of this section to the Keeper and shall, in compliance with any request which the Keeper, with the consent of the Lord President, may from time to time make, cause a report to be prepared and sent by the sheriff clerk to the Keeper, giving such information as may be specified in the request, regarding:

- (a) the nature, situation and condition of all buildings in which any such records are kept;
- (b) the age and condition of such records;
- (c) the arrangements made for their care and preservation, and for indexing them and rendering them available for inspection by the public; and
- (d) any other matters connected with the care and preservation of such records."

Under subsection (1) records older than 25 years of six sheriffdoms and of parts of four sheriffdoms have been transmitted to the Record Office.

19. So far as Sheriff Court processes are concerned the position is largely the same as that of Court of Session processes though not on the same scale. If, as has been suggested to us for Court of Session processes, Sheriff Court processes were removed elsewhere, a further amount of space could be made available. It may be possible to achieve a measure of weeding among these processes, but this would not affect the rest of the Sheriff Court records unless weeding were possible there also. By arrangement with the Keeper many of the records in the custody of Sheriff Clerks are destroyed at intervals of six, ten and twenty years from their dates of origin and only the residue are retained until delivery to the Record Office. We deal later with deeds registered in Sheriff Court Books (paragraph 26).

20. *Item 9.* The Register of Sasines makes much the largest demand on storage space in the Record Office, occupying, indeed, about one-third of the space occupied by all categories of records, in volumes, boxes and bundles combined.\* In this connection, the O. and M. report which we commissioned suggested that, to avoid the continued absorption of space by this type of record, the copies of deeds presented to the Department of the Registers for registration should be recorded on microfilm. The space at present occupied by the Sasine Registers (not including the Sasine indices and abridgements) is 18,720 linear feet. With micro-filming, the annual growth in space occupied by future accessions (including indexes and abridgements) would be reduced to an estimated 68 feet as against some 250 feet if the present system were continued. If it were feasible to microfilm the whole of the existing registers, the saving in space, if the existing registers were then removed elsewhere or destroyed, would be enormous. The space of 18,720 feet at present occupied by the volumes of the registers would be reduced to about 1,200 feet (Appendix D). We consider this matter later in paragraph 65.

21. We have had in view that the problem of storage accommodation in the Record Office may be greatly changed by the introduction of a system of registration of title which is the subject of a reference to a Committee now examining this question. If such a system were adopted, we apprehend that it would entirely supersede registration in the Register of Sasines. It would be premature to consider what the fate of the existing registers would be or whether that matter would be dealt with in any legislation giving effect to a system of registration of title. In any event it would be many years before the new system became fully effective, too late to affect the immediate urgency of the storage problems with which the Record Office is faced.

22. *Item 10.* The Register of Inhibitions and Adjudications, with which may be included the older Register of Hornings, creates no substantial problem. The average annual intake amounts approximately to only two feet. The total space occupied is at present some 810 feet. If it were necessary, it would seem possible that the greater part of these registers, having served the purpose for which they were originally preserved, could be removed to other quarters, though the saving in space thereby achieved would be relatively small.

23. *Item 11.* In the Register of Deeds there may also be scope for a considerable

\* The originals of the deeds registered are not retained in the Record Office unless the presenter wishes a deed to be registered for preservation or preservation and execution as well as for publication. Otherwise they are returned to their owners and a full-size photocopy retained.

reduction in space occupied by the existing records and by future accessions. The deeds covered are deeds presented to the Record Office for preservation or preservation and execution. Prior to 1934 they were copied by hand or in typescript and bound in volumes. Since 1934 they have been copied photostatically and the photostats bound. The originals have throughout been preserved in boxes. There thus exists what is virtually a duplication of records. The originals are rarely referred to by a searcher and then only in exceptional cases such as when it is necessary to verify a signature; but it is the practice of the Record Office when a copy is required of a deed registered before 1934 to take this from the original deed. It would seem, however, that post-1934 originals could be transferred to another place without any appreciable inconvenience to anyone. We note that if this could also be done with the pre-1934 deeds—which are not generally accessible to the public but only to the staff for copying purposes—the whole of the space occupied by boxes of deeds could be released. This amounts to 3,600 linear feet, which represents more than half the space occupied by the Register of Deeds.

24. We received evidence that it would be feasible to apply the system of micro-filming to the Register of Deeds and that if future accessions were microfilmed the space occupied by the future annual intake of the registers (excluding the original deeds) would be reduced from about 30 feet to 2 feet. A further reserve of space could at any time be made available if it were practicable to microfilm, as required, part of the existing registers. We deal with this in paragraph 65.

25. The Register of Deeds includes a number of volumes of registered Protests. The operative effect of these Protests has in all but the most recent cases expired. If any records were removed from Old Register House, these documents could be included.

26. Among the Sheriff Court records transmitted to the Record Office there will be a number of deeds registered in the Sheriff Court Books. No question arises of microfilming these deeds when presented for registration (unless, of course, microfilming were introduced in the Sheriff Courts). The records are at least 25 years old when they reach the Record Office.

27. Of the remaining items we refer here only to item 15, the records of various public departments. These records so far occupy a relatively small place among the records housed in the Record Office, but in his overall estimate of annual intake at 1,500 linear feet (paragraph 3), the Keeper has assumed a substantially increased intake of this item in the next few years. We deal with this matter in paragraph 31.

*Some Observations on the Future Intake of Records  
by the Scottish Record Office*

28. The approximate annual intake of the Scottish Record Office in recent years is given in Appendix C. In round figures this totals 1,000 linear feet. The figures for regular statutory accessions are calculated on the basis of the transmissions current in 1961 while those for more sporadic accessions have mostly been calculated over the ten year period 1952-1961; that for ecclesiastical (Church of Scotland) records is an average of two years only (1960 and 1961).

29. The figure for private muniments, which is an average over a ten-year period, includes what the Keeper describes as some "exceptionally large" collections, most of which were received prior to 1957. Since then transmissions in this category have declined and it will be noted that the average for 1957-61 is only slightly more than half the average over the ten-year period. The Keeper expects a further fall in this category after the next few years. The term "private muniments" appears to be applied by the Keeper largely to collections of family papers, though the records in his Office are not at present all of that type and include other forms of private records. A number of our witnesses stressed the growing importance of the records of companies and other economic and social agencies as historical records. While we do not profess to judge the historical issues involved, it seems unlikely that the twentieth century will prove less prolific than earlier centuries in producing such records or that they will be of less interest to historical researchers than similar records of the past. At any rate some of our witnesses in this particular field thought such documents to be of the greatest historical importance. There must therefore be some doubt about the possible future intake of this item: clearly the present volume of records deposited under this head represents only a small fraction of what might be deposited at some future time. All that we can possibly do in the circumstances is to note the existence of this type of record with its potentiality to increase in volume, and the body of opinion that feels it should be preserved, without trying to estimate the strength of its flow or without trying to judge whether it should in fact be deposited in the Record Office. Wherever it is deposited it seems clear that there will be continuing pressure to have such records preserved somewhere.

30. The Keeper expects to face increases in accessions to the Register of Sasines, Sheriff Court records and local authority records. It seems likely that any increase in the flow of Sasine volumes will be gradual. It is difficult, however, to forecast the intake of Sheriff Court records. This flow can be controlled by the Keeper, since he initiates the procedure for transmitting these records to the Record Office; but it is clearly desirable that there should be no avoidable delay in bringing any valuable material in these records under the control of skilled archivists. Again, if county councils begin to transmit their records, a considerable demand on space will have to be met.

31. It also seems likely that the Record Office will be faced with a flood of departmental records being committed to its charge. There have been no transmissions of the records of the four Scottish Departments set up in 1939. A survey in 1961 showed that these Departments held 57,300 linear feet of records, and steps have yet to be taken to assess what proportion of this figure may ultimately be transmitted

to the Record Office. Nor does it seem possible to estimate with any precision what will be the volume of records worth retaining from those which will be created in the future. The same comments apply to the records of the Scottish headquarters of United Kingdom Departments and of some, at least, of the nationalised industries in Scotland. In our view, this is one of the main problems to be faced in considering future accommodation for the Record Office. The position is already a matter of consideration between the Keeper and some of the Departments concerned. We understand that the system envisaged by them provides for the weeding of records before they are sent to the Record Office. We accept as being still applicable the conclusion of the Committee on Departmental Records which reported in 1954\* that microphotography did not provide a satisfactory means of reducing the bulk of departmental records.

32. There seems no doubt that any decrease in the intake of some categories of records will be more than outweighed by the increase in other categories, particularly departmental records, and perhaps also records of the type referred to in paragraph 29. The Keeper's estimate that the total intake will rise so as to produce an annual average of 1,500 linear feet over the next 50 years clearly presupposes a very large proportionate increase in annual intake by the end of that period. This may seem a generous estimate, but in the light of our observations in the preceding paragraphs, we think it is by no means unrealistic, and we have accordingly used it as the basis of our calculations relating to the Record Office.

#### SHOULD THE TYPES OF RECORDS

#### ACCOMMODATED IN THE RECORD OFFICE BE RESTRICTED?

33. It has been suggested to us that we should consider the desirability of such a wide variety of records being received by the Record Office as at present. It is true that the "accommodation needs" of the Record Office, which we are charged to consider, are dependent to some extent on the types of documents which the Keeper is prepared to accept. But to consider whether the Keeper *should* accept certain classes of documents raises fundamental issues of archive policy which we do not feel called upon to investigate. Such an enquiry would involve consideration of the whole function of the Record Office, the varying needs of different groups of research workers, the possibility of establishing local record offices, and so on. We have conceived our function as being limited to the consideration of the accommodation needs of the Office on the assumption that the policy on acceptance of records continues as at present.

#### LOCAL RECORD OFFICES

34. We received a considerable amount of evidence on the desirability of setting up regional (or local) record offices. We do not think, however, that this is a matter which comes within our terms of reference. Nor could it be properly considered and assessed without enquiry on a much larger scale than any we have undertaken. Several such offices exist in England where they attract much interest and support. All we can say that is relevant to the purposes of our enquiry is that if local or regional record offices took root in Scotland they might limit the future flow of local records and private muniments to the Scottish Record Office and so ease its future accommodation problems.

\* Cmnd. 9163.

*Records held by the Office of the Registrar General*

35. The statistics of records under the care of the Registrar General as at mid-1962 were given to us as follows:

## ACCOMMODATION IN NEW REGISTER HOUSE

		linear feet of shelving
Storage accommodation available		19,800
Records presently held:		
Registers of Births, Deaths and Marriages	10,358	
Indexes to Registers	282	
Census planning papers	150	
Census papers up to 1931 census	1,060	
Census papers for 1951 and 1961	4,500	
Current ancillary papers	800	
Dormant ancillary papers	1,000	
	18,150	
Accommodation still to be filled		1,650

Estimates made by the Registrar General on the assumption that his registers of births, deaths and marriages continue to be compiled and kept in their present form show that the reserve of 1,650 feet will be exhausted by about 1975. There will certainly be no room in New Register House for the 1971 census papers.

36. Temporary premises in connection with census returns are used at census periods, but the census records and relative papers are ultimately transmitted to New Register House and kept there. Until 1931, the census returns were recorded in transcript books with several returns to each page. For the censuses of 1951 and 1961 the original schedules and enumeration records are being preserved. The transcript books up to and including 1931 do not present a serious storage problem. The returns for 1951 and 1961, however, take up four times as much shelf space as all the others together. If the returns for future censuses are of the same form as those for 1961, they will require at least 2,200 linear feet every 10 years. The Registrar General accordingly wishes to return to the earlier method for future censuses, and from the point of view of accommodation we think this proposal is to be commended, whatever view is taken of the future use of New Register House. He also considers that, while the records of the latest census and of the censuses up to 1931 should be retained in New Register House, the records of intervening censuses could be removed to premises on the outskirts of Edinburgh or elsewhere.

37. The Registrar General's main proposal for saving space is that the duplicate registers of births, deaths and marriages received from the local registrars should, after a retention period of two years for indexing and correction, be microfilmed and transferred to microcards. He proposes that this system should be instituted in 1965. These microcards would be retained in New Register House and the originals be transmitted to other premises on the outskirts of the city or elsewhere for preservation. The microcards would be available for staff and public inspection in New Register House in the same way as the registers are at present. For con-

venience in microcarding, the form of register would have to be altered and it is to permit this change being made that the introduction of microcarding would be delayed till 1965. Under this system the space required for future registers in New Register House would be reduced from 100 linear feet per year to six feet, the annual growth being increased by ancillary papers to eleven linear feet. This would mean that the reserve of 1,650 feet, if used only for the registers of births, deaths and marriages, would be sufficient for the next century. We note that the need for accommodating the registers from which the microcards have been copied could be avoided if these registers could be destroyed after being photographed. If this were done there would still be two copies in existence, the microcards and the full-size registers retained by the local registrars. Such a change would require legislation.

38. As we have shown, the Registrar General can make space available in New Register House by outhousing all the census records after 1931 except those of the most recent census. (At present this simply means outhousing the 1951 census records which take up 1,500 linear feet). On this plan further space would become available if the 1971 and subsequent census returns were recorded in transcript books (see paragraph 36) since, soon after 1971, the 1961 census records (3,000 linear feet) would be outhoused and replaced by the 1971 returns (probably about 200 linear feet). We understand that the Registrar General could also outhouse about 1,000 feet of what are described as dormant ancillary papers. If these changes were to be combined with the use of microcards referred to in the preceding paragraph, the Registrar General's Office would have adequate storage accommodation for an almost indefinite period (Appendix D).

39. It will be seen that the Registrar General accepts the need for both the use of microfilm and the outhousing of some of his records. It has been suggested, however, that his accommodation needs could be reduced and the problem as a whole simplified if some of his records were transferred to the Scottish Record Office. We were informed that in 1959 the Scottish Records Advisory Council advised the Secretary of State that the older records under the charge of the Registrar General, prior to a date to be fixed by him, should be transferred to the custody of the Keeper of the Records. The question whether the Registrar General's Office is solely a record creating department or both that and a record holding department seems to us to raise issues of archive policy which are outside our terms of reference as we have interpreted them. Accordingly we have proceeded on the assumption that the custody of the respective records will remain as at present. It is possible also that legislative authority would be necessary for any such transfer.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Accommodation Requirements of the Lyon Office*

40. The records of the Lyon Office are not numerous and they grow slowly. About 1,000 linear feet would be adequate to house them. As already noted, the problem here is to find, not only storage space of this extent, but also accommodation appropriate to the dignity of the Lord Lyon's functions. We do not think his present accommodation meets these requirements.

*Consequences of Transferring New Register House  
to the Scottish Record Office*

41. We have already briefly referred to the claim by the Keeper of the Records to the accommodation in New Register House. The Keeper wishes to have the building as an extension of the Record Office, substantially for storage purposes. The Ministry of Public Building and Works stated that it could be adapted to provide 81,000 linear feet of shelving. This would involve introducing deck floors into the dome to provide additional storage space (an alteration which would destroy an attractive internal architectural feature of the building) and filling the rooms and, where possible, the corridors with runs of shelving. With a continuance of the present system of record keeping this would solve the problems of the Record Office for probably some 50 to 60 years.

42. There is no doubt that, at least for this period, this solution would, from the point of view of the Record Office, be simple, convenient and economical. The case for such a transfer indeed goes further than this. We received evidence from a number of witnesses stressing the importance, from the point of view of research workers, of having all the records in one place. "One of the most unfortunate developments of our time from the point of view of the hard-working historian", wrote one eminent witness, "is the increasing tendency to divide collections of archives owing to difficulties of space". In our next chapter we consider in some detail the question of "outhousing". At this stage we merely note that these are strong arguments, from the point of view of the Record Office and its users, for allowing it to take over New Register House.

43. We should also record at this stage that the Keeper has supported his claim to New Register House by reference to the circumstances in which it was built. In his view the Scottish Record Office is legally entitled to occupy the building because the ground on which it stands was acquired for the purpose of building a repository for the public records. We do not think that this is a question which comes within our terms of reference; and in any event we are informed that you have been advised that neither the Record Office nor the Office of the Registrar General has any title to extrude the other from New Register House. We therefore do not feel called on to consider competing claims of the Keeper and the Registrar General to the use of the building as a matter of right. There still remain the merits of their claims on grounds of public convenience and expediency. There is congestion of records in both Register Houses and our task is to consider how this problem of congestion in the respective Offices can best be met.

44. The allocation of New Register House to the Record Office would involve removing the Registrar General's Office from New Register House. On this the following points seem to arise:

- (1) The new office for the Registrar General would have to be centrally situated so as to be convenient for the public who at present account for some 20,000 personal calls in the year.
- (2) If the whole office were to be so situated, without any change in the system of record keeping, the accommodation would have to be many times larger than the existing building. An indefinitely expandable building on a central site is not practicable. As we have shown, without a change of system

New Register House would accommodate the Registrar General only till about 1975. Any new building should, in our opinion, look forward to a minimum working life of 100 years.

(3) A building of the capacity of New Register House, or one somewhat smaller, would be sufficient if microcarding were adopted as the Registrar General proposes, together with some measure of outhousing for census records and duplicate registers.

(4) The acquisition of a central site and a peripheral site and erection of suitable buildings under (3) would be costly. A site and building to meet the requirements of (2) would be still more costly. Detailed figures are given in paragraphs 74 and 75.

(5) The Office of the Registrar General would cease to share certain common services with the Record Office and this alone would increase the total running costs of both Offices.

(6) A further possible alternative suggested would be to house all the records of the Registrar General on a peripheral site and to establish an office or bureau on a central site, where enquirers could call and view by closed circuit television any record which was the subject of their enquiries. This would be inconvenient, however, for persons who have to make elaborate searches and may also have to relate their searches to documents in the Record Office.

45. We may sum the matter up by saying that if the Office of the Registrar General is removed from New Register House, accommodation at least equivalent in capacity must be found for the Office elsewhere in the centre of Edinburgh. An expandible peripheral repository will be required for the Office whether or not it is removed from New Register House.

46. We have considered a suggestion by the Keeper of the Records that the Registrar General's Office should be transferred to the site of the old Post Office in Waterloo Place. This would keep it in the centre of Edinburgh and still near enough to the Record Office to share certain common services and to meet the convenience of those who wish to consult the records in both Offices. On enquiring from the Ministry of Public Building and Works we were told that, to the extent that they are above the level of Waterloo Place, the new offices to be built on this site had already been allocated to another Department. However, the extensive storage accommodation below this level has not yet, we understand, been allocated, and we have considered whether this might help solve the problem. We understand that this basement accommodation will not be suitable for offices. Even if it were so suitable, the floor space available would be only just adequate to provide the Office of the Registrar General with the *office* accommodation which it requires, no balance being left for the storage of the records of that Office. The decision of the Ministry of Public Building and Works therefore seems to rule out the use of the site in Waterloo Place for the Office of the Registrar General. There are, in any case, other grounds for criticising the object of this proposal, i.e. the freeing of New Register House for purely storage purposes, and we deal with these in paragraphs 48 and 72.

*Consequences of Maintaining the Office  
of the Registrar General  
in New Register House*

47. We have already summarised (paragraph 8) the arguments of the Registrar General in favour of his Office remaining in New Register House—its convenience for the public, and obvious suitability for its purpose. We attach much importance to both these factors. But if the Registrar General's Office remains where it is, room must be found elsewhere for the accessions to the Record Office. The merits of various proposals for meeting this problem now fall to be considered. One is to remove from the Record Office to an ancillary building little-wanted or duplicate records. Another is to introduce a system of microfilming registers or records suitable for the purpose, with or without removal of some records elsewhere. As a further ancillary measure there may be added the process of weeding referred to in paragraph 16. We deal with these in turn.

#### PROVISION OF AN ANCILLARY BUILDING

48. An ancillary building could be provided either in or near the city centre or on the outskirts of the city. In accordance with our terms of reference we have given some thought to the question of land use. We have had in mind that whatever solution we suggest should be a long-term one: the short term is no basis for planning the storage of records. Over the long term it is impossible to assess the needs of the Record Office but these will obviously not diminish. From this we deduce that if additional accommodation is to be planned now, it must be capable of expansion. This requirement is difficult, if not impossible, to meet in the city centre. Again, we are impressed by the submission of the Department of Health for Scotland\* that the provision for storage only of additional space in the city centre would not only be unnecessarily expensive but would be uneconomic and inefficient from the point of view of land use. We therefore consider that if additional storage accommodation is to be provided for the Record Office elsewhere than in New Register House, it should not be in or near the city centre.

#### OUTHOUSING

49. The alternative—new accommodation on the periphery of the city—raises the issue of outhousing. We have already noted that many of those who sent evidence to us stressed the importance of keeping all the records together in one place. In the submissions which the Scottish Records Advisory Council laid before the Secretary of State in 1959, they drew attention to the historical tendency, reinforced by modern legislation, to bring all the Scottish public records together into "a central national repository under a single responsible official". They went on to express the view that a single large repository on the outskirts of the city, while cheaper than a building in central Edinburgh, would be unsatisfactory for one of two reasons. On the one hand, if it were to house only those records which are

\* The planning responsibilities of the Department of Health for Scotland were taken over on 1st June, 1962, by the Scottish Development Department.

very seldom consulted, it would, in the Advisory Council's view, have no appreciable effect on the problem of accommodation. On the other hand, if such an outhouse were to hold a substantial part of the records it would have to be provided with search room facilities. This, they argued, would create problems for the Record Office arising from the division of integrated groups of records; it would inconvenience searchers wishing to collate separated records; and it would "enormously" increase costs of administration.

50. The Advisory Council, together with a number of those who submitted evidence, referred to the "outhouse" of the Public Record Office in England. This is a wartime military hospital at Ashridge, some 30 miles north of London, where the accommodation consists of a number of huts. The Keeper of the Public Record Office has informed us that about 10% of the documents produced at the Public Record Office in London are brought on request from Ashridge. 24 or 48 hours' notice is required. There is a small search room at Ashridge which is used by a very limited number of persons, prior notice being required. Public transport to the outhouse is almost non-existent and there are no catering facilities. We appreciate that this arrangement can prove highly inconvenient to a research worker. For one thing, he may not always know until he sees a document whether it is of interest to him.

51. Nevertheless, we think it is self-evident that, sooner or later, outhousing of records in the Scottish Record Office will be necessary. It cannot hope to expand indefinitely in the city centre. In our view the question at issue is not whether outhousing is acceptable. It is whether outhousing should be adopted now to deal with the immediate crisis or be postponed for a few decades. At this stage we simply record that outhousing must be considered as one of the courses open to the authorities in dealing with the present accommodation problem of the Record Office. We do not feel that the difficulties which are said to arise from the outhousing arrangements of the Public Record Office are of much relevance to the problem in Edinburgh. If it is decided to provide the Scottish Record Office with an outhouse on the outskirts of the city, we see no reason why it need be more than five or six miles from Old Register House to which it could be linked by a frequent van service.

52. If all the records referred to in Chapter 2 as possible candidates for outhousing were removed from Old Register House (including Eagle Buildings for this purpose as it is simply a temporary expedient) the space cleared would be 24,230 linear feet, arrived at as follows:

Court of Session papers	.	.	.	.	.	19,000 linear feet
Sheriff Court processes	.	.	.	.	.	4,140
Originals of Deeds since 1934	.	.	.	.	.	740
Originals of Sheriff Court Deeds	.	.	.	.	.	350
						<hr/>
						24,230

Some further increase in space set free would be secured if to this were added:

- the pre-1934 originals of deeds in the Register of Deeds;
- those parts of the Register of Inhibitions and Adjudications and of the volumes of registered Protests which would, by lapse of time, have ceased to serve any useful purpose as notice or records of private rights or claims;
- the signed minute books of the Keeper of the Registers (which are

duplicated in the abridgements of the Sasines Registers and, we understand, are never in use); and

(d) records at present housed in Eagle Buildings and not in any of the above categories (we understand that the records in Eagle Buildings are regarded as "dead wood").

We are unable to make an accurate estimate of this figure but something around another 5,000 feet we would regard as a reasonable addition, making about 29,000 feet in round figures. Of this total, 3,320 feet represents the records presently housed in Eagle Buildings. Assuming therefore that this 29,000 feet of records were outhoused and Eagle Buildings vacated, there would be released about 25,500 feet of space in Old Register House.

53. This figure of 25,500 linear feet is based, however, on the hypothesis that all the records referred to are removed. This need not, of course, be done (and in some categories could not be done) at one time by total clearance of the respective items. The process could be gradual, making space as required in the course of time. We contemplate the retention in Old Register House of the more recent records in certain categories, but this should have a negligible effect on the total result. We have already noted (paragraph 13) that Court of Session processes are now being retained at Parliament House, and we think this might well be continued as an indefinite arrangement, provided that, as they become 20 years old, these processes are transferred to an outhouse under the control of the Record Office. We would apply the same rule to those processes already in the Record Office, retaining those that are less than 20 years old in the Record Office and outhousing the others. The total volume of these processes now in Old Register House would thus be removed in slightly less than 20 years. Again, it would be necessary to retain the most recent volumes of the Registers of Inhibitions and Adjudications and of Registered Protests in Old Register House until by the running of prescription they ceased to have any operative legal effect. The earlier volumes, which would constitute much the greater portion, could be outhoused.

54. Originals of pre-1934 deeds in the Register of Deeds are, we understand, used by the staff of the Record Office for copying purposes. We think, however, that if outhousing were established as part of the routine of the Record Office there would be little inconvenience in outhousing all originals in the Register of Deeds and bringing in to Old Register House any required for copying—or in having them photographed in the outhouse if that should be found more convenient or economical. In the result, the effect on the problem of space of the retention in Old Register House of some of the records referred to in paragraph 52 would be minimal and would leave our figure of 25,500 linear feet substantially unaffected. If this volume of records were outhoused, together with the annual intake of the categories of records involved, future annual intake of the remaining classes of records would be reduced to an average of 850-950 linear feet (which includes provision for the intake of departmental and like records and allows for an increase in that and some other categories—Appendix D). The space set free, together with the space available at mid-1960, would suffice for about 40 years from that date.

55. As we have already indicated, the problem might further be met from another direction by introducing a system of microfilming for suitable registers. As has been observed (paragraph 20), the annual intake of the Register of Sasines could be reduced from 250 feet to 68 feet, and of the Register of Deeds (paragraph 24) from 30 feet to 2 feet. This means that space that would be at present absorbed in 1 year would be sufficient for 4 years. If the incoming records in the classes

mentioned in paragraph 52 were diverted to another repository, and deeds presented for registration in the Register of Sasines and Deeds were microfilmed, the annual intake of 850-950 linear feet referred to in the preceding paragraph would be reduced to some 650-750 linear feet which would still be absorbed each year by the intake of other records and the microfilmed intake of the Registers of Sasines and Deeds. The result of:

- (a) microfilming the accessions to the Registers of Sasines and Deeds;
- (b) outhousing categories of records on the lines indicated in paragraph 52; and
- (c) outhousing the accessions (possibly with minor exceptions) in the categories outhoused under (b)

would be to provide accommodation in Old Register House for about 50 years, again reckoning from mid-1960. This takes into account the accommodation still available there and the rooms which the Record Office use in New Register House. A still further reduction could be achieved if departmental and like records were outhoused. The annual intake would then become 300-400 feet per year. We deal with this matter in paragraph 70.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Conclusions*

56. With all these matters in mind we have to consider what we think is the best solution of the respective accommodation needs of the Keeper of the Records and the Registrar General. Both are urgent, for time is running short. If the Registrar General stays in New Register House and adopts microcarding, with some outbousing of duplicate records and some of the census papers, his need is solved. But in this case the problem of the Keeper of the Records becomes urgent. On the other hand if the Keeper takes over New Register House the Registrar General's problem becomes urgent and demanding. Before explaining our conclusions we deal with some preliminary considerations.

#### REGISTRATION OF TITLE

57. We ignore possible prospective changes or developments which seem to us too remote to have any immediate effect on the questions we have to consider. One is the introduction of Registration of Title to which we have referred in paragraph 21. The ultimate effect may be substantial in relieving pressure on accommodation in the Record Office, but it will come too late to affect the immediate problems under our consideration.

#### BUILDINGS ON THE PRESENT SITE

58. Another suggestion made to us is that the Register Houses should be enlarged. Various schemes have been mentioned to us. We have been advised by the Ministry of Public Building and Works that it would be technically feasible to add to New Register House buildings which would accommodate 20,000-25,000 linear feet of compact shelving. In the Ministry's view, with which we agree, this would diminish very seriously the amenities of New Register House and its surroundings.

They do not recommend it, nor do we. (We also understand that certain adjoining proprietors have servitude rights over the ground to the west of New Register House.) Even if it were thought reasonable to add to the buildings on the present site, either by building on vacant ground or adding to the height of the present buildings, this would probably take so long that it would not meet the pressing needs of the immediate present. We do not feel able to urge such a scheme on the Government as an immediate necessity at the present time, when other solutions seem to be open, or find it necessary to consider how far the expenditure involved, which must be considerable, would be justified.

#### USE OF MICROFILM

59. The use of microfilm, whether in the form of reels of film or of microcards, appears to be increasing for the purpose of saving space. It is quite widely used commercially and our enquiries produced evidence of its use in connection with archives both in Great Britain and overseas. Nevertheless, we are conscious that any proposal to reduce to microfilm the Registers of Sasines and Deeds would involve material changes in methods of registration and in searching procedure, and we have given much consideration to this point. We have not considered ourselves a body appointed or qualified to conduct a technical investigation into this question, but we have made such enquiries as we thought necessary from persons qualified in this field.

60. We have been assured that it is "virtually established that photographs on the acetate base film now used for microfilm records will outlive records on all normal types of paper". The British Standards Institution and the American Standards Association have made separate studies of the permanence of microfilm records. The B.S.I. study, made in co-operation with a number of scientific bodies including government departments with chemists and other scientific staffs, states that there are three main risks of deterioration of microfilm records. These are:

- (a) injurious chemicals from the processing can remain on the film, or injurious chemical substances from the atmosphere may come into contact with it;
- (b) moisture and the effects of mould growth may affect the gelatine forming the image;
- (c) heat and excessive dryness can make film and gelatine brittle.

The risk at (a) can be countered by ensuring that at the time the film is processed, the chemicals used are thoroughly washed off. We are told that standard tests are available to show when this has been accomplished. The risks with (b) and (c) can be countered by controlling the temperature and humidity in the storage space. There is a fairly wide safe range for both temperature and humidity and control is neither difficult nor costly. The B.S.I. report recommends that microfilm should be inspected about every five years and adds that if such inspection indicates any deterioration, however slight, a new film can readily be made. We should add that the scientific studies on which these reports were based were apparently concerned not with the simple type of records of black print on white paper such as the Registers which we have in mind, but with photographs displaying gradations of light and shade where the slightest change in detail might be objectionable.

61. It may be said that the permanence of any recording material is always a matter of doubt when it is first introduced; the same comment must have applied to parchment, paper, ink, typescript, photostatic copies and other materials. But

there are safeguards here to meet any possible risks. In the Register of Deeds the original documents, as has been noted, are preserved and these are the documents that we consider could well be housed in a separate building. In the Register of Sasines the deed is generally returned to its owner, but the particulars are noted in separate indexes and abridgements. In the event of any unforeseen destruction of the copy in the Register the original could probably be traced to its holder. In any event it is highly unlikely that in the event of such a calamity steps would not be taken legislatively or otherwise to protect the parties affected by the loss. A further point which we note is that if registration of title comes into force the use and value of the Register of Sasines for the purpose for which it was originally intended will virtually disappear. Microfilming has a further advantage in reducing running costs of recording deeds in the Register of Sasines and Register of Deeds. The saving if microcarding were adopted would be from £15,000 to £19,000 per annum, according to the method used, compared with the cost at present of making and binding photostat copies.

62. The system which has been commended to us is as follows. Master films of the registers would be kept under conditions of suitably regulated temperature and humidity. These would not be used for reference but working copies would be made from them which would be available to searchers and which would be replaced by fresh copies from the master films when they (the working copies) became worn or damaged. In our calculations in paragraphs 20 and 55 we have assumed that both the master and working copies of each roll of film would be accommodated in Old Register House, but there would obviously be advantages, from the point of view of safety, in keeping the master copy elsewhere. No difficulty, we were assured, would arise for searchers in searching and obtaining copies of deeds recorded by microfilm. This view was reinforced by a firm of searchers who gave evidence that they would find no difficulty in working from microfilm provided not more than four volumes of the Sasines Registers were recorded on one spool of film.

#### THE MAIN ISSUES

63. We have already stated our view (paragraph 45) that if the Registrar General's Office is to be removed from New Register House, new accommodation for it should be found in the city centre. We have also concluded (paragraph 48) that if the Registrar General's Office is not moved, the additional accommodation required by the Record Office should be on the outskirts of the city.

64. We can now state the broad questions which we have to consider as follows:

- (1) Should the Registrar General be displaced from New Register House to allow it to be used as storage accommodation for the records of the Record Office?
- (2) Should the Registrar General remain in New Register House and the accommodation problems of the Record Office be met (a) by the introduction of a system of microfilming the Sasines Registers and the Register of Deeds; (b) by a measure of outhousing; and (c) a process of weeding?
- (3) Should the Lyon Office be accommodated in either Old or New Register House, or elsewhere in Edinburgh?

65. We note first that an affirmative answer to question (1) would give the Record Office free storage space, reckoning from mid-1960, of about 85,000 linear feet (see Appendix D) which at an assumed average intake of 1,500 feet of records

annually would suffice for about 57 years, reckoning from mid-1960. Question (2) presents more complex problems. We considered the possibility of microfilming the existing volumes in the Registers of Sasines and Deeds. Theoretically, this could produce about 20,000 feet in Old Register House (Appendix D) if the existing volumes were either outhoused or destroyed. The cost would, however, be prohibitive—about half a million pounds to microfilm the registers even from 1880. On the other hand, to reproduce incoming deeds on microfilm would cost only about one-eighth of the present cost of making photostat copies of the deeds and binding them to form registers. Against this, the cost of making the microfilmed registers available to searchers might be very slightly more than the cost of the arrangements presently in force for supplying volumes to searchers. On the information before us relating to microfilm, and subject to the safeguards referred to in paragraphs 59-62, we would feel confidence in accepting microfilming of deeds presented for registration in the Register of Sasines or the Register of Deeds.

66. Outhousing would make space available: microfilming would ensure that the available space is filled more slowly. As we have shown, the combined effect of the two methods would be to provide space in Old Register House for about 50 years from mid-1960 (paragraph 55). We make no allowance for weeding since its possible scope cannot be estimated and since it is more likely to be feasible with regard to the outhoused records rather than those retained in Old Register House; but we refer generally to the possibilities of weeding in paragraph 80.

67. An extension of the "life" of Old Register House by 50 years does not differ significantly from the result which would be produced by allocating New Register House to the Record Office (about 57 years). In our view, the dislocation which such a transfer would cause to the Office of the Registrar General could not be justified unless it solved the accommodation problems of the Record Office for a much longer period than this; nor would it avoid a repetition of the present difficulties in 50 years' time. We agree that if the Record Office were to occupy New Register House and adopt not only microfilming but the outhousing of the records indicated in paragraph 52, such an arrangement would be adequate, on present assumptions about intake, for well over a century. But this would involve the acceptance of a system of record keeping which could make a considerable amount of space available as easily and more economically without removing the Registrar General's Office from New Register House.

68. We have already noted (paragraphs 42 and 49) the importance attached by research workers to having all records in one place. We fully recognise the force and importance of this point. But it is at best a relative one and dependent on the possibility of having the necessary accommodation at one place. In the present context, if New Register House were used by the Record Office without any change in its record keeping system, the question of accommodation would have to be raised again in about fifty years' time. We cannot foresee what the position will be then, but we cannot assume that it will be any easier. It seems to us that a dispersion of records would then be inevitable. It is, in our view, essential that this problem should be faced now, particularly since postponement of the problem for the Record Office by allotting to it New Register House would necessarily involve dislocation of the Office of the Registrar General and involve much greater expense on the Record Office later on. We consider that a scheme on the lines we have indicated should be begun now. It need not be carried out all at once; indeed,

it is obviously suitable for implementation by instalments. We do not consider that it would cause any material inconvenience to research workers.

69. For carrying out the scheme adumbrated in the preceding paragraphs we envisage a large, expandible, specially designed building on the outskirts of the city. As the basis on which we have selected certain categories of records for out-housing (paragraph 52) is that they are infrequently used, we do not envisage the immediate provision of research facilities at the outhouse for the small number of persons who may wish to refer to these categories. We see no need, at least for the present, to provide the outhouse with other than watching, cleaning and paper-keeping staff. It should be linked with Old Register House by a van service which should provide the necessary security and a reasonably prompt service for those wishing to see documents at Old Register House.

70. While we see no need to equip the outhouse with a research room at the beginning, the building should be so designed that research facilities can be introduced later; and it should be so located that it is reasonably accessible by public transport. In suggesting this, we have particularly in mind the possibility that some day departmental and like\* records may have to be deposited there. Some of the evidence we received suggested that these records will form a *corpus* which can be conveniently studied without reference to the other categories of records which, we envisage, would remain in Old Register House. We do not suggest that for this reason all departmental records should be moved to the outhouse as soon as it is established, although their removal may ultimately be necessary unless an equivalent volume of other records can more conveniently be outhoused. We note that, assuming the average annual intake of departmental and like\* records over the next 50 years at 350 linear feet (in our view a reasonable estimate), the removal of these records and the consequent reduction of intake into Old Register House might prolong its "life" to about a century (Appendix D).

71. In our view, the measures outlined in the preceding paragraphs would allow a flexible approach to the whole problem to be adopted over the next half century. We regard this as one of the main arguments in favour of adopting a policy of peripheral outhousing now rather than allotting New Register House to the Record Office.

72. A further matter that has influenced us in our examination of this problem is the question of land use. A building to which members of the public resort in considerable numbers for information, for purposes of research, or for obtaining extracts of documents of importance to themselves, is best located in a central situation, and the use of a central location for this purpose is likely to be an instance of sound land use. A store of little used material should not, on the other hand, normally be given a central location, for which there are many alternative possible uses. In the present case there is a wide divergence in the extent to which records are required for consultation. Of some groups of records it may be said that they will rarely if ever be required at all. We think it reasonable to take account of these differences and outhouse anything that may be regarded as being in minimal demand.

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\* See paragraph 31.

## ESTIMATES OF COST

73. We now consider the question of cost so far as relevant to the matters which we have been reviewing.

74. If the Office of the Registrar General were moved from New Register House new accommodation would have to be found for him and this, we consider, should be in a central situation. His Office would also require an outhouse for papers which need not be retained centrally and for the registers which he proposes should be microcarded (unless it were possible to destroy these registers). Figures supplied to us by the Ministry of Public Building and Works show that the cost of a new building located centrally in Edinburgh with the necessary office space of some 8,000 square feet and 25,000-30,000 linear feet of shelf space would, with site and incidental expenses, be about £200,000. To this should be added the cost (about £20,000) of an extensible building on the outskirts of the city; this estimate is based on the space likely to be required by records deposited there between now and 1985,\* provision being included for a site to allow 300 per cent. expansion. The adaptation of New Register House for the storage of Record Office records to a capacity of 31,000 linear feet (paragraph 41) would cost about £32,000. Thus the total capital cost of this change would be about £250,000.

75. It is not easy to estimate the changes in running costs which this proposal would involve. We assume that the running costs of the central office of the Registrar General would not be materially different as a result of removal. There would, however, be additional cost in heating, lighting, cleaning and maintaining the outhouse for that Office: we estimate this at approximately £1,000 per year. Even more difficult to estimate is the additional cost which would fall on the Record Office as a result of its occupation of New Register House. The Record Office would not require the whole building at once, and it seems reasonable to assume for our purposes that for about 25 years from the date when New Register House was taken over by the Record Office, half the cost of maintenance would fall on other (temporary) users of space in the building. On this basis, we think the maintenance and staff costs falling on the Record Office in that period might very roughly be estimated at £3,750 per year. Thus the total addition to running costs resulting from this proposal might be about £4,750 per year.

76. If the Office of the Registrar General remains in New Register House, and if the categories of records in the Record Office referred to in paragraph 52 were removed to an outhouse on the outskirts of the city, we would expect that, on grounds of economy in capital costs and running expenses, a common building would be provided to accommodate the records to be outhoused by both the Record Office and the Office of the Registrar General. On this assumption, there will be required initially for storage outhouse capacity of 31,500 linear feet, plus storage capacity sufficient to outhouse the intake of categories of records so removed. For the Record Office this would run in the region of 600 feet annually, assuming the accessions to the Registers of Sasines and Deeds are microfilmed as we have suggested. Records from the Office of the Registrar General would be outhoused at

\* We have assumed that the size of the first stage of the extensible outhouse should be adequate to provide the capacity required over 25 years, but architectural considerations may suggest a shorter or longer period. Moreover, as our estimates of intake are based on the Keeper's estimate over 50 years, our estimates of space required by 1985 may be slightly inflated.

irregular intervals (see paragraph 38) and we estimate the amount of such space required by his Office up to 1985 would be about 8,000 linear feet, of which 2,500 linear feet could be taken up at once. Thus to make provision for this period the outhouse should have a capacity of roughly 52,000 linear feet (Appendix D). The cost of this, inclusive of the cost of a site allowing expansion of 300 per cent. has been estimated for us at £100,000. The running costs of Old and New Register Houses would remain very much the same as formerly, but there would be additional running costs because of the use of the outhouse. We estimate these additional costs as follows:

Heating, lighting and maintenance	.	.	.	.	.	£2,500
Staff	.	.	.	.	.	4,000
Van service	.	.	.	.	.	800
						<hr/> £7,300

Since the comparable running costs of Eagle Buildings at present amount to about £4,100 per year, the net additional annual cost would be about £3,200.

77. We think it reasonable to set off against this figure the annual saving which would result from the adoption of our suggestions on microfilming the intake into the Sasines and Deeds Registers. This saving, which would amount to somewhere between £15,000 and £19,000 depending on the method used, would be credited to the Department of the Registers which is responsible for making the copies of the deeds presented for registration in the Registers of Sasines and Deeds. But since the adoption of a system of microfilming is an important part of our recommendations for reducing the demand on space in Old Register House, we feel that the financial saving which would result should be taken into account in assessing the cost of our proposals.

78. The comparison is thus:

*X. Displacing the Office of the Registrar General and adapting New Register House for use by the Record Office*

Capital cost	.	.	.	.	£250,000
Running costs	.	.	.	.	<hr/> £4,750 per annum

*Y. Retaining the Office of the Registrar General in New Register House and adopting microfilming and outhousing for both Offices*

Capital cost	.	.	.	.	£100,000
Running costs	.	.	.	.	<hr/> £3,200 per annum

against which should be set the saving likely to result from the use of microfilm for accessions to the Registers of Sasines and Deeds, say

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£17,000 per annum

79. On a consideration of all aspects of the matter and for the reasons outlined in the preceding paragraphs we have come to the conclusion that the Registrar

General should not be displaced from New Register House and that the accommodation needs of the Record Office should be met by a combination of outhousing and microfilming.

#### WEEDING OF RECORDS

80. While such arrangements will solve the problem for as far ahead as we need look, we think that a measure of control over the growth of the total volume of records should be exercised by some form of weeding. This is already being done or will be done in relation to sheriff court records and departmental records but we think there is scope for it in other categories, especially the Court of Session records. We have already referred to this possibility in paragraph 16, and we would urge that it be examined by a committee on which the Keeper, the Court, the legal profession and the historians could be represented. We see little justification for the present system whereby a great mass of legal trivia is being kept in perpetuity at public expense.

#### THE LYON OFFICE

81. We have referred to the position of the Lyon Office in paragraphs 6 and 40. We think that if the accommodation needs of the Keeper of the Records and the Registrar General are adjusted as we have recommended there could be found within either Old or New Register House, perhaps preferably in New Register House, space which should provide the Lyon Office with adequate accommodation, more commodious and suitable than the rooms which it has at present. This we think would be desirable not only to give Lyon convenient access to the genealogical and other records housed in these Offices, but for reasons of economy in permitting his very small amount of accommodation to share in the common services of heating, cleaning, door services and the like. We do not consider it within our province to designate any particular rooms within the buildings which he should occupy. For reasons we have already indicated we think it should be in rooms other than those which he occupies at the moment. The matter should be worked out by the authorities concerned. We would only emphasise that priority should be given to the administrative arrangements and needs of the Keeper of the Records or Registrar General as the case may be.

#### PUBLIC AND STAFF FACILITIES

82. We think it desirable that some further consideration be given to the possibility of making improvements in the research accommodation and facilities in the Record Office, as well as in such conveniences as lavatory and cloakroom accommodation for both sexes. In this connection we include improved facilities for professional searchers. It may be that the changes we recommend will make available space for these purposes. The facilities generally which we have in mind are more space, greater accessibility of indexes and reference books, better lighting, ventilating and heating, more seating and desk accommodation, provision for dictating machines, photography, ultra-violet ray inspection and such like. The legal search room in the Dome of Old Register House, with its height, glass cupola and numerous apertures seems to us to call particularly for improvements. A permanent room of convenient size and suitably equipped for use as an exhibition room for display of historical documents would be a desirable feature, in place of the inconvenient gallery in the Dome at present used for this purpose. This might be found in the main room now forming part of the Lyon Office. Some consideration

should also be given to making the basement rooms in the Record Office more suitable and secure for storage purposes. This will involve protection from damp or flooding with the possible re-siting of pipes that run through or above basement rooms. We do not go into these matters in detail. They will have to be worked out by the parties concerned, as things develop in the way of securing more space and less congestion in the Record Office.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *Recommendations*

83. We can now make our detailed recommendations, some of which we recognise may require legislative or other authority. They are largely linked together and interdependent and for that reason we have kept them to the end of our Report. They are:

- I. We do not consider that the accommodation needs of the Scottish Record Office, the Office of the Registrar General and the Lyon Office require any additional buildings in central Edinburgh.
- II. We consider, however, that immediate steps must be taken to deal with the congestion of records and to meet the accommodation needs of the three Offices.
- III. To meet this situation we make the following recommendations:

#### *The Scottish Record Office*

1. That a system of microfilming be applied as soon as possible to future intake of deeds presented for registration in the Register of Sasines and the Register of Deeds.
2. That the best recognised methods for securing the safety and permanence of the master films and copies thereof be adopted and that the master films be kept in a separate place from the copies.
3. That duplicate and little consulted records in the categories referred to in paragraph 52 should be outhoused.
4. That extracted and unextracted processes of the Court of Session at present being retained in Parliament Square should be kept there for twenty years in conditions satisfactory to the Keeper of the Records as regards indexing, preservation and security; and that after twenty years they should be outhoused along with the records referred to in Recommendation 3.
5. That, either before or after removal of the records referred to in Recommendations 3 and 4, a process of "weeding" should be instituted on the lines indicated in paragraph 80.
6. That the outhouse required under Recommendations 3 and 4 should be in or near the outskirts of Edinburgh and should take the form of an extensible building suitable for the safe storage of records.
7. That the outhouse should be so designed that it can be enlarged to meet future demands for storage space and to provide research facilities, when required.

8. That accommodation and facilities for searchers, research workers and others within the Record Office be improved and, if possible, a suitable exhibition room be provided for the public in place of the existing accommodation in the Dome.

*Office of the Registrar General*

9. That a system of microcarding the registers sent in by local registrars, as proposed by the Registrar General, be instituted as soon as possible.

10. That, to facilitate extracts being issued of microcarded registers, the form of the registers be altered to suit the requirements of the Registrar General.

11. That, after being microcarded, the registers be removed to other premises for storage (unless, in the light of experience, it is thought feasible to destroy them) and the microcard copies be retained in New Register House.

12. That such other premises be combined with or be part of the premises referred to in Recommendation 6.

13. That census returns should be recorded in transcript books as was done with the returns prior to the census of 1951.

14. That before the papers of the 1971 census require to be accommodated in New Register House, the census returns and relative papers of the 1951 and 1961 censuses be outhoused in the premises referred to in Recommendation 6; the 1971 papers should be outhoused by 1981, and so on. Any dormant papers or other records of his Office which the Registrar General considers need not be retained in New Register House should also be outhoused.

*The Lyon Office*

15. That the rooms at present occupied by the Lyon Office be transferred to the Record Office and improved accommodation be provided for the Lyon Office preferably in New Register House.

16. That such accommodation be selected with due regard to the administrative arrangements of the Keeper of the Records and the Registrar General.

84. We are much indebted to our Secretary, Mr. W. K. Fraser, for the invaluable assistance we have received from him in collating the large and intricate amount of material which we have had to consider in preparing our report. We would like also to acknowledge the courtesy and help we have been given by the Keeper of the Records, the Registrar General and the Lord Lyon King of Arms in furnishing us with figures and statistics and familiarising us with the work of their respective offices.

Keith of Avonholm (*Chairman*)  
David Alexander  
Donald J. Robertson  
Hugh Watson

W. Kerr Fraser (*Secretary*)  
18th March, 1963.

## APPENDIX A

### *List of Persons and Organisations who Submitted Evidence*

The Keeper of the Records of Scotland, Sir James Fergusson, Bt.  
The Lord Lyon King of Arms, Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, K.C.V.O.  
The Registrar General for Scotland, Mr. A. B. Taylor, C.B.E.  
The Lord President of the Court of Session  
Mr. R. G. Cant, University of St. Andrews  
Professor S. G. Checkland } University of Glasgow  
Dr. R. H. Campbell  
Professor Norman Gash, University of St. Andrews  
Emeritus Professor J. D. Mackie, C.B.E., H.M. Historiographer in Scotland  
Professor G. O. Sayles, University of Aberdeen  
Dr. C. V. Wedgwood, C.B.E.  
Association of First Division Civil Servants, Scottish Record Office Branch  
Business Archives Council of Scotland  
Committee of Scottish Bank General Managers  
Convention of Royal Burghs  
Department of Health for Scotland  
Douglas & Company, Searchers  
Faculty of Advocates  
Historical Association of Scotland  
Millar & Bryce, Searchers  
Scottish History Society  
Scottish Home Department  
Scottish Record Society  
Scots Ancestry Research Society  
Stair Society  
University of Aberdeen  
University of Edinburgh  
University of Glasgow

## APPENDIX B

### *List of Persons and Organisations who assisted the Committee on request*

British Museum  
Justiciary Office, Edinburgh  
Keeper of the Public Record Office, London  
Keeper of the Registers of Scotland  
Ministry of Public Building and Works  
Librarian, National Library of Scotland  
Principal Clerk of Session  
Sheriff Clerk of Midlothian  
Teind Clerk  
H.M. Treasury, O. and M. Division

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Office of the Registrar General  
Office of the Director of Titles  
Department of Public Records and Archives  
Assistant Inspector of Legal Offices  
The Provincial Archivist, Saskatchewan.

} Ontario

*NOTES TO APPENDIX C*

- (1) The figures in these columns cover records in Old Register House and in the accommodation in New Register House allotted to the Record Office.
- (2) The figures in this column do not include inter-departmental services (apart from the General Register of Sasines) nor do they allow for daily references in cataloguing accessions and answering queries by correspondence.
- (3) In addition, several copies of Abridgements and Indexes are in constant use.
- (4) Valuation rolls are also in fairly constant use to facilitate searches in the Register of Sasines and other registers.
- (5) The average intake of private muniments in 1957-61 was 108 linear feet.

**APPENDIX C**  
**Scottish Record Office—Records Held, Acquisition and Usage**

Category of Records	Quantity of Records Held in July, 1940						Annual Rate of Acquisition (Based on 1939 average, where applicable) in terms of staff space	Percentage of Change in number of records in July, 1940		
	Number of Boxes, or equivalents in equivalent boxes, etc.		Number of Volumes		Number of Feet					
	In Record Office	In Staff Buildings	In Record Office	In Staff Buildings	In Record Office	In Staff Buildings (or staff space)				
1. Records of Parliament, Party Council, Ordn. Com., etc.	469		3,170			300		0		
2. State Papers, Treaties, Ac- cessions, Ordns., etc.	11		1,030					4		
3. Court of Session	19,431	5,015	7,450	81	10,000		(based on 1939 average of 1939-40)	31		
4. Judiciary	337		314			370		0		
5. Commissariat	1,750		1,246			1,670		125		
6. Sheriff Court	6,217	3,707	3,631	187	3,238	3,238	(average of 1939-40)	0		
7. Admiralty Court	274		112			350		0		
8. Ecclesiastical Records— Churches, Perfected Estates, etc.	5,074		4,683			3,600		37		
9. Registers of Sasines	73		121,348		81,400	890				
10. Registers of Indentures and Affidavits			4,463		1,110	8		1,400		
11. Registers of Deaths	9,123		9,134		1,700	70		750		
12. Ecclesiastical	5,649		3,691		350		(average of 1939-40)	39		
13. Chancery	365	3,079	4,013		1,070	30		37		
14. Royal Commissions	264		79		130	—		—		
15. Scottish Office (including Land Advertiser's Dept.)	419		3,075		700		(average of 1939-40)	23		
16. Valuation Rolls			11,307		1,270	35		1750		
17. Perpet. Manuscr.	9,260		5,617		318	6,650	(average of 1939-40)	123		
18. Burgh and Other Land Authorities	304		3,451		1,040		(average of 1939-41)	74		
19. Miscellaneous Office Records	406		927		1,070	300	—	0		
	77,026	9,038	195,025	683						
			195,025		56,024	75,025	562			

## APPENDIX D

*Details of Calculations*

para. 20 At present the amount of space required annually for the Register of Sasines is about 250 linear feet. Of this 56 linear feet is required for indices and abridgements. The balance of 194 linear feet represents the bound volumes: this can be reduced by microfilming to 12 linear feet. Therefore the total space required after microfilming is  $56 + 12 = 68$  linear feet. Applying the factor  $\frac{12}{194}$  to the space presently occupied by the volumes gives the following results:

$$18,720 \times \frac{12}{194} = 1,160$$

say 1,200 linear feet

para. 38 We assume here that, for the 1971 and subsequent censuses, transcript books requiring 200 linear feet of shelving for each census will be used. Then:

	linear feet
reserve at mid-1962 . . . . .	1,650
dormant papers (to be outhoused) . . . . .	1,000
census papers for 1951 and 1961 (to be outhoused) . . . . .	<u>4,500</u>
<i>Deduct</i>	7,150
provision for papers of most recent census . . . . .	<u>200</u>
<i>Deduct: intake up to end of 1971</i>	6,950
registers, etc. to 1964*, say . . . . .	300
registers, 1965-69* (on microcards) . . . . .	55
registers 1970-71 (awaiting microcarding) . . . . .	<u>200</u> <u>555</u>
	6,395

This figure—say 6,400 linear feet—represents the space available for registers and associated papers after 1971. It is likely to be used at an annual rate increasing from 11 linear feet.

para. 54 The figure of likely intake—850-950 linear feet—is derived as follows from the figures in Appendix C:

	linear feet
Register of Sasines . . . . .	250
Register of Deeds (volumes only) . . . . .	30
Ecclesiastical records . . . . .	25
Chancery records . . . . .	19
Valuation rolls . . . . .	35
Private muniments . . . . .	108
Local authorities' records . . . . .	37
Departmental records (see paragraph 70), say . . . . .	350
	854
say 850 linear feet.	

To allow for the expected overall increase in intake (Chapter 3) this has been expressed as 850-950 linear feet per year.

\* We assume that microfilming would begin with the 1965 registers. Before microfilming, all registers will be kept in their original form for two years to permit indexing and correcting.

para. 65 The figure of 85,000 linear feet is produced as follows:

	linear feet
space available in June, 1960 (see para. 3)	9,770
space available in New Register House, if entirely devoted to records	81,000
Deduct: space already allocated there to the Record Office, say	6,000
	<hr/>
	75,000
	<hr/>
	84,770
	<hr/>

say 85,000 linear feet.

The effect of microfilming the existing volumes in the Registers of Sasines and Deeds would be as follows (the factor applied for microfilming is 12/194—see calculation above under paragraph 20):

	Without microfilming	With microfilming
	linear feet	
<i>Register of Sasines</i>		
volumes	18,720	1,160
indexes	4,680	4,680
<i>Register of Deeds</i>		
volumes	2,500	156
deeds and indexes	3,240	3,240
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	29,140	9,236
	<hr/>	<hr/>

∴ release of space as a result of microfilming, approximately 20,000 linear feet.

	linear feet
para. 70 Available space in Old Register House at mid-1960 (see para. 3)	9,770
Space which can be created by outhousing (see para. 52)	25,500
	<hr/>
	35,270

Assume departmental records to be outhoused forthwith:

Then to space available add 740 linear feet (Appendix C,  
item 15), increasing the above total to 36,010, say 36,000  
linear feet.

Assumed rate of intake, 650-750 linear feet per year (see para. 55) say	700 linear feet per year
Deduct departmental records	350   "   "   "   "   "
	<hr/>
Intake reduced to	350   "   "   "   "   "

$$\text{Then } \frac{36,000}{350} = 100 + \text{years}$$

para. 76 The figures of space required in an outhouse may be tabulated as follows:

<i>Office of Registrar General</i>	<i>linear feet</i>
(1) dormant papers	1,000
(2) papers of 1951 census (see para. 38)	1,500
(3) papers which could be outhoused immediately	2,500
(4) papers of 1961 census (see para. 38)	3,000
(5) papers of 1971 census (assuming use of transcript books)	200
(6) originals of registers of births, deaths and marriages, after microfilming, over period 1965-1985 (see para. 37)	2,000
(7) ancillary papers, say	200
(8) papers which could be outhoused up to 1985	5,400
Outhouse requirements of Office of Registrar General for that period (total of (3) and (8))	7,900
	say = 8,000 linear feet

*Scottish Record Office*

The outhouse needs of the Record Office depend to a considerable extent on the volume of records annually taken in by that Office in the categories which we suggest should be outhoused. We estimate this as follows:

	<i>linear feet</i>
Estimated average annual intake over the next 50 years	1,500
<i>Deduct:</i> annual saving of space as a result of microfilming accessions to Registers of Sasines and Deeds which will be (para. 55) 210 linear feet, say	200
	1,300
<i>Deduct:</i> annual intake to Old Register House which will be (para. 55) 650-750 linear feet, say	700
	600
∴ Annual intake of outhoused categories	
Then the space requirements in the outhouse are:	
(9) papers which could be outhoused immediately (see para. 52)	29,000
(10) space required over the next 25 years at 600 linear feet per annum	15,000
	44,000

Total requirements (sum of (3), (8), (9) and (10)) = 52,000 linear feet.